

**CABARRUS COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN  
ANNEX D  
EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION**

**Primary Agencies**

- Communications and Outreach

**Support Agencies**

- Board of County Commissioners
- County Manager
- Cabarrus Health Alliance
- Sheriff's Department
- Sheriff's Department – Communications Lieutenant
- Emergency Management
- Human Services
- Municipal Fire Departments
- Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs)

**I. PURPOSE**

This annex provides guidance on preparation and distribution of emergency information to the public during emergency situations.

**II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS**

**A. Situation**

1. During emergency situations, the public needs detailed information regarding protective actions they should take to minimize loss of life and property. The rapid onset of an emergency such as a tornado or hazardous material release limits the warning time available.
2. Emergency Management personnel use official County communication channels, including the website, local government channel and social media, in addition to the various media outlets that serve Cabarrus County (County), to inform the population of an emergency situation and the actions they should take to best respond to the event.
3. In some cases, the public information system cannot react rapidly enough to properly warn the public about the hazard. For this reason, it is important that prior to the occurrence of an emergency, the public is made aware of potential hazards and the protective measures they need to know.

4. The public may accept rumors, hearsay, and half-truths as valid information, which may cause unnecessary fear and confusion.

#### B. Assumptions

1. Local media outlets cooperate in broadcasting and publishing detailed emergency-related instructions to the public.
2. A severe emergency situation may disrupt digital communications, telephone service and public utilities.
3. Local and regional radio/television stations without emergency power may be off the air. If this occurs, County emergency services, such as the Sheriff's Department and volunteer fire departments, use public address systems on emergency vehicles and door-to-door sweeps to warn citizens of hazards related to the emergency.

### **III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

#### A. General

1. Emergency public information (EPI) efforts focus on specific, event-related information. This information generally focuses on critical topics such as warning, evacuation and shelter.
2. It is also important to keep the public informed of the general progress of events.
3. The County Public Information Officer (PIO) and Emergency Management report the facts of the hazard as accurately as possible and provide advice concerning necessary protective actions.
4. Rumor control is a major aspect of the information program.
5. The PIO acts quickly to correct erroneous information wherever discovered, but especially any incorrect reports that originate from the media.

#### B. Execution

1. The County PIO and the Emergency Management Coordinator develop and conduct public education and information programs to increase public awareness of potential hazards and the steps citizens should take to protect themselves. The PIO coordinates with media outlets in the County to provide these programs for their use.
2. The PIO prepares EPI documents addressing major emergencies and maintains these base documents on file for use.
3. When an evacuation is imminent, the PIO responds to public inquiries and prepares new or modified public announcements.

4. The PIO prepares all news releases and public information disseminated at the County level.
5. The PIO coordinates locations and times for press briefings and releases.
6. A media/press briefing room will be established at the Sheriff's Department or Governmental Center. Media representatives (i.e., reporters, cameramen, etc.) are not permitted in the Cabarrus County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) without the express permission of the Emergency Management Coordinator. If allowed to visit the EOC, media representatives are escorted at all times by the PIO or the assistant PIO.
7. Additional personnel to support the PIO come from different County government departments and agencies, as needed. The heads of those departments and agencies detail and reassign individuals to temporary duties.
8. The PIO coordinates a telephone "bank" to assist County residents in reporting and responding to problems associated with an emergency situation, as necessary. Personnel to operate these telephones come from County government departments.

#### **IV. DIRECTION AND CONTROL**

- A. The County Manager or his/her designee approves all press releases prior to dissemination.
- B. The PIO operates from the EOC and a media/press area located outside of the EOC.
- C. The PIO provides the public and the media with information on new developments affecting emergency management in the County. The PIO also utilizes other types of programs to increase awareness of emergency management and response, such as web- and social media-based campaigns, lectures or presentations on emergency preparedness, distributing educational brochures and developing programs for local government channel.

#### **V. CONTINUITY OF GOVERNMENT**

- A. Staffing assignments for positions in the Emergency Operations Center allow for continuous operations.
- B. Selection and assignment of personnel is the responsibility of the agencies represented.
- C. Once assigned to the EOC, the Emergency Management Coordinator (EOC Manager) supervises these personnel.
- D. In the event that the primary EOC is not functional, the Emergency Management Coordinator activates an alternate EOC and notifies the Board of Commissioners of this change. Transportation is provided to any County Commissioners who cannot reach the EOC locations.
- E. Orders of Succession:

1. PIO
  2. Assistant PIO
  3. Emergency Management Coordinator
  4. County Manager
- F. Orders of succession for departments and agencies that support EPI are in accordance with their internal standard operating procedures.